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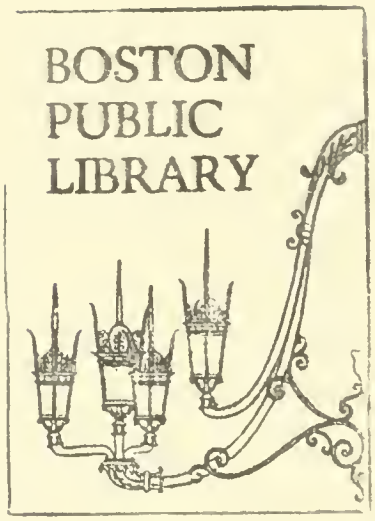

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A WORK PROGRAM FOR BOSTON'S COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAM

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Boston Redevelopment Authority

February, 1970

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I. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAM

The Community Renewal Program is to be used as an instrument to help the City of Boston's agencies obtain a better understanding of the current situation in the City and to better plan for the City's future. The purpose of the CRP is to develop data and train agency staffs to analyze data in designing programs for the City. We will use CRP funds to systematize the flow of basic information about the City and in the process, involve all staff levels in making this information useful.

We propose to develop a flexible method of retrieving and displaying demographic and economic information about the City along with information on the physical composition and condition of the City. In order to perform effectively, city agencies must be armed with accurate and relevant data which are available to policy makers. The increased emphasis on long-range planning will be further stimulated by ready access to current data. Routine day-to-day decisions will be facilitated. In addition, decision makers will be better prepared to respond to sudden changes in the urban setting. For example, there is no systematic information on the population of the City, property values, employment, housing condition, changes in the housing stock,

and other factors which could assist the City's agencies in forming policies. We believe that we have a unique combination of strategy and operational ability to build a system which will provide a continuously available flow of useful information.

A major output of Boston's CRP will be to provide the information for structuring a series of consistent and related policies and programs to help guide the specific actions that Boston agencies undertake to "renew" the City. The starting point for this will be the initial studies of the CRP focusing on tax-related issues. These will hopefully result in a series of action proposals which will be added to in subsequent work. After enough of these proposals are generated, we hope through CRP to make them part of a consistent structured program for Boston's urban renewal -- a program that can be reviewed, updated, and refined annually, because new information will be continuously available.

A series of reports will be produced to describe the technical details of the system and the analysis done on any particular policy issues. These reports will show the results of the decision-making process and document the results of using the information system for this purpose. These reports will be quite

specific and will be oriented towards helping frame the City's policy and program decisions that affect community renewal and development.

While policy oriented reports will be the key written product of CRP, there will also be a series of technical reports produced, which describe the particular methodologies employed by the analysts in creating the policy reports and the information system. These will be designed to provide other professionals dealing with CRP with the benefits of Boston's experience with this particular approach. The methodologies for actually creating the various files and programs in the information system will also be documented.

In particular, recent computer technology makes it unnecessary to build a "data bank." The process of matching every address in the City to coordinates on Boston's map has been completed, and this technique, known as geocoding, makes it possible for every agency to maintain separate tape files. Agency data will not have to be fed into a central file. As long as data are identified by address, they can be retrieved for any particular section of the City. Data from different departments and agencies will be comparable without the administrative problems of trying to centralize the collection of data. The system now used by Boston is one which the Bureau of the Census and HUD hope to have implemented by planning agencies throughout the country.

II. THE APPROACH

The fundamental strategy for Boston's CRP is to initiate obtaining information, from existing City sources, which can be used in responding to basic City problems. The information now exists but is, in effect, inaccessible. This information will be put into appropriate machine-readable form, then used to undertake a series of policy-oriented analyses. These analyses will in turn be used to help clarify issues and shape City policies and programs. We expect that any one analysis will lead to the identification of other information needed to reach proper conclusions. This information can then be made comparable with that of the basic information system through geocoding, and further analyses will be possible.

Thus, as analysis is done and conclusions are developed and presented, new analytical projects will be suggested, designed, and carried out. Subsequent projects will depend on a number of factors including:

1. The experience with the information systems use on the first project.
2. The current issues which are felt to be suitable for analysis.
3. The availability of the required analytical techniques.
4. The views of the Information Users Committee.

The most important result of the CRP will be the interaction between information continuously available from the system and the analyses performed by City staff members. A number of reports will be produced over time. The data system and analytical products developed early in the process will be continually refined and improved at subsequent stages in the operation. We hope to update not only the data in the system but conclusions based on those data once new pieces of information become available.

The building of the system has already begun. We have developed a system for extracting a great deal of relevant information pertaining to property within the City from the assessor's records. This information will provide a detailed picture of Boston's housing stock, industrial plant, commercial and retail space, and tax exempt property. The effect of alternative assessment and taxing practices can be analyzed. Because a working geocode exists for Boston, it will be possible to make other data comparable without physically merging the tape files. The uses of the information will not be adequately investigated by the time the current allocation of CRP funds runs out. We will need additional funds supplied both by the City and federal sources.

There are a number of projects currently underway which complement the CRP and may lead to future CRP analyses. The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), is now cooperating with Boston's newly established Economic Development and Industrial Commission (EDIC) in conducting a survey of Boston's manufacturing firms. The survey is similar to the one conducted in New York City as part of that city's Community Renewal Program. The results of the survey will provide such information on blue collar employment in the city such as wage distribution, minority group participation, seasonality and cyclicality of employment, and expansion or relocation plans of the firms.

Boston was one of almost one hundred cities which responded to the recent HUD Request for Proposals for Municipal Information Systems (and subsystems). The subsystem on which Boston chose to focus was the delivery of city services, e.g., public works and inspectional services. Boston's proposal was not funded, but the City has decided to begin developing the system on its own. At some point in the future it is likely that the CRP will be very helpful to the City in its efforts to deal with such problems as the delivery of city services. Close coordination has already been established between those working on CRP and this other municipal information system.

Close cooperation between the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), Boston Housing Authority (BHA), the Mayor's Office of Public Service (OPS), and Boston's Model Cities Agency, has resulted in the establishment of a task force on housing problems. The information to be provided by the CRP will, of course, be very valuable in establishing the facts about Boston's housing stock. As the task force progresses and better defines the analysis it plans to do, the CRP will be able to tie in with the group's efforts. The agencies mentioned above are also working with the Boston's poverty agency, Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), in sharing data from the 1968 R.L. Polk Company Street Directory Survey and recent survey results from the Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies' Boston Area Study.

The Office of Public Service (OPS) and the Deputy Mayor for Administrative Services have taken great pains to insure that city agencies are kept abreast of recent developments in data processing. A committee for exchanging information among the Mayor's chief advisors and their staffs is in existence and functioning at both levels. The committee is called the Information Users Committee and is composed of the Directors of the BRA, BHA, OPS, EDIC, Budget, Assessing Department, and the Deputy Mayor. They have met to consider all steps

taken in redirecting Boston's CRP and have agreed to participate actively in CRP by providing policy direction and staff assistance. The CRP will be successful only insofar as it succeeds in involving these men and their staffs in analyzing Boston's problems and providing future city employees with data sources and methods.

We hope that the CRP will have some additional benefits associated with it. The cooperation already taking place among various city agencies in the use and dissemination of information is likely to combine with CRP to suggest administrative changes which might improve agency operations. The Deputy Mayor for Administrative Services has clearly stated that he will act to improve administrative practices wherever practicable and that he expects the CRP to suggest possible changes to him. The Commissioner of Assessing is well aware of the ways in which the CRP will be able to help him in supervising his operations. The CRP is intended to illuminate policy issues, but if it is successful, it cannot help but influence administration.

III. THE WORK PROGRAM

This section describes: (A) the method of organizing and operating Boston's CRP, (B) the basic information collection and systems design operations, and (C) the analytical studies.

A. PROGRAM OPERATIONS

The program will be organized in such a way that it can provide critical linkages between the directors of key city agencies, their staffs, and the information system that is being developed for their use and benefit. Analytical studies will be the mechanism through which issues important to the policy makers can be studied, a dialogue developed, and recommendations for policy and program changes made. This process will necessarily involve the training of city agency staffs to use the information system and the resulting analytical studies for their continuing policy and program planning.

There are three components to the operational plan for CRP: (1) the policy making and direction-giving apparatus, (2) the day-to-day management of the program, and (3) the specific operation of the various projects and tasks.

1. Policy Direction--The Information Users Committee

The overall policy direction for the CRP will rest with an interdepartmental committee which has been established under the aegis of the Mayor's office. Membership on this committee is flexible. At the present time, it consists of the heads of the following agencies:

- the Deputy Mayor's Office
- the Budget Office
- the Mayor's Office of Public Service
- the Boston Housing Authority
- the Boston Redevelopment Authority
- the Economic Development and Industrial Commission
- the Assessor's Office

This committee will meet from time to time to receive reports, to discuss policy issues and provide direction both for technical work and program outputs. It will approve work projects before they are initiated as part of the CRP program. We expect the committee as a group and its members individually to provide the technical staff with the guidance they need both to determine the types of information the system should contain, to ensure the cooperation of City departments, and to design the analysis of the issues to be studied.

2. Program Management

The day-to-day operations of the CRP will be the responsibility of a small staff which is administratively within the BRA but will report to the User's Committee for policy and program guidance. This staff will have the following duties and responsibilities:

a. To prepare the agenda for User's Committee meetings and follow up on their directives, including developing proposals for specific data system design and analytical studies.

b. To develop the general specifications for all the work projects to be undertaken in the program, including their staffing, operation, and timetable.

c. To monitor all work projects and maintain budget control over them.

d. To maintain liaison with HUD, including preparation of work programs and progress reports.

e. To maintain liaison with a variety of agencies and departments in Boston in order to keep abreast of their programs which could be aided by the information system and analytical capability being generated by the CRP.

This latter responsibility will be most important, for it will provide the CRP staff with continuing ideas about future application of evolving capabilities. It will also provide the inputs required to plan a continuing program of analyses projects which can help the city's overall renewal efforts.

3. Program Operations

In order to carry out any specific project designated by the User's Committee, a task force will be created from among the CRP staff and the technical staff of City agencies. Outside consultants will be used only for staff coordination and highly technical questions. They will not do reports for the City but will work with City employees. Each task force will be product oriented. They will have specific assignments, budgets, and timetables. If the CRP staff at the direction of the User's Committee is not able to design projects with a high probability of successful completion, a task force will not be assembled to attack a problem simply because the problem is important. There are many problems which exist in the City over which government has little or no control.

The task forces will be set up in whatever way makes sense for the specific projects. Every effort will be made to include permanent City staff on each task force so that they will have experience in using the methods and interpreting the results of the study.

In general, the task forces will be of two types:

1. Those responsible for the information system design and development. These will include experts on the data files of specific agencies (from the agency staffs), information system designers, computer specialists, and others whose skills are required to plan, develop, and implement an information system.

2. Those responsible for policy and program analysis projects. These will include specialists and City agency staff analysts and planners. These task forces will be responsible for:

   a. determining the use to be made of the information system;

   b. determining the data needed to perform the analysis;

   c. developing the specific hypothesis to be tested and evaluating related issues;

   d. actually conducting the required analyses;

   e. reporting on findings and making recommendations to the responsible policy makers;

   f. producing final reports.

B. INFORMATION COLLECTION AND SYSTEM DESIGN

As indicated earlier, three kinds of information are essential: demographic, economic, and physical development. Boston's CRP

information system will be based on information collected and used by City departments. The data will be gathered initially from the Assessing, Building, and Housing Inspection Departments. Because of the geocode structure, it will not be necessary to centralize the information in one master data file. These departments already record their information by address, and the computer programs which match address from one file to another and locate the address on a computer-conceived map of Boston have been written and tested.

Geocoding provides the essential framework of the information system, matching addresses to coordinates on the City's map. The two computer programs in geocoding are commonly referred to as ADMATCH and a DIME file. The information identified by address is matched to city blocks by a computer program, ADMATCH, developed during the Census Use Study in New Haven and already improved for use in Boston. The DIME file is a list which spatially relates the blocks of the City and is useful only when matched to a second list containing addresses and information related to those addresses. Information gathered by address can be displayed for any geographic subdivision of the City if it is geocoded. Previously, it had been almost impossible to obtain data from different sources about the same section of the City.

For example, police information is recorded by address and police precinct of the City, and Assessing Department data is recorded by address and ward of the City. The police precinct and the ward are not bounded by the same streets. One could not compare police and assessing data for the same area, and information about subdivisions of a precinct or ward could not be separated out. With geocoding it is possible to specify the boundaries of any geographic subdivision of the City and retrieve every department's data for that section, aggregated by the area, the block face, or along a street.

The people who designed and built the geocoding system for New Haven have completed the matching process for the City of Boston. Earlier this year we tested their programs with a 10 percent sample drawn from the R. L. Polk Company's 1968 Census of Boston. Over 98 percent of the addresses matched. The computer aggregated Polk Company information for each Boston Redevelopment Authority Planning District and Action for Boston Community Development Target Area.

With a geocode it will not be necessary to try to change the way individual departments gather or display their data. The departments may maintain their own districting systems and their data will still be useful to those who wish to perform analysis for

different subdivisions of the City. The ability to geocode information is the most important aspect of the information system being constructed. Its usefulness, for example, in delineating the boundaries of subareas of the city which qualify for state and federal programs will be substantial.

1. The Assessing Department

The Assessing Department is legally responsible for estimating the value of every parcel of land in the City and the value of buildings and improvements made on those parcels. In order to do this, a record is made describing each parcel and its buildings. This information includes but is not limited to:

a. the street address and assessor's block and parcel number

b. square footage of the lot

c. the type of construction of the building

d. the number of stories in the building

e. the use of the building (number of apartments, number of offices, etc.)

f. the name and address of owner

g. whether or not the parcel qualifies for a tax exemption because of its use (church, school, etc.)

h. the assessed value of each parcel and building

The assessor's information for one ward of the City is now being put on magnetic tape, and systems analysis of the Assessing Department is being done to insure that the information on tape can be updated. The first displays of the data for that ward are already available. Ward 5, which contains the Back Bay section of Boston, was chosen for this pilot project. One of the displays will be a crosstabulation of use by structure for Back Bay. A commission of distinguished citizens is now studying the proposal to allow construction of high-rise condominiums in the Back Bay. The information on current use is of great interest to them.

We do not expect that an information system containing data only from the assessor's records will yield all the intelligence required to make sound recommendations on the issues that will be raised. Other information will be required. There are a number of key sources of data that will be the prime candidates for the next additions to the system. These include:

a. building permit records -- which contain information structural changes that have been made on buildings along with the costs of these changes.

b. housing inspection records -- which contain additional information on building conditions and occupancy.

c. the 1970 Census data which will contain a whole array of data on demographic, economic, and housing characteristics.

d. sample surveys and other data.

2. The Building Department

The Assessing Department is the best source of information on stock of structures in the city. The Building Department is the best source of information on how this stock is changing. The owners are required by law to seek permits from the Building Department before they alter their property significantly.

The Building Department keeps, and updates daily, an entry book of applications for permits for buildings and alterations, demolitions, elevators, fire escapes, fire repairs, etc., showing their purposes and estimated costs. This information is entered for each parcel at the time the request for a permit is made. It includes address, ward, owner, type of new construction (if any), number of families and stories, type of alteration, purpose of new construction or alteration or change of occupancy, estimated cost, and the date the permit is issued.

The most important pieces of information for our purposes are changes of occupancy, additions to present buildings, legalization of occupancy, new construction, and all major alterations with estimated costs included. This information will provide the City with accurate, updated data which the assessors do not provide but which are important for an adequate understanding of what is happening to the City's building stock.

3. The Housing Inspection Department

The major task of the Housing Inspection Department is to accept and act on complaints made by tenants and other persons interested in the condition of housing. Thus, if there are rats, or if there is faulty plumbing or a leaky roof, and a complaint is made, the Housing Inspection Department sends out an inspector, sets a date by which the cause of the complaint must be cured, and continues to inspect to ensure that progress is being made.

The department files the complaints when they come in. First, the problem is described in detail. Second, the buildings which are the subject of the complaints are classified in one of four categories.

The categories relate primarily to the structure of the building and its overall condition. This information is of interest to

the assessors, as well as the Housing Inspection Department (and the Building Department), and there should be cooperation among the City departments to establish a standard condition code. These categories which the Housing Inspection Department uses are very similar to those suggested by HUD and used in different cities across the country.

The Housing Inspection Department also collects information on the structure (brick, frame, etc.) of each building against which a complaint has been filed, the number of stories and dwelling units, whether the building is vacant, and whether it is residential commercial, or industrial. As noted above, the Building Department collects information about buildings for which permits have been requested. By combining the information from these two sources with that kept in the assessor's records, and by updating this information, an information system could be built which would be of great use to the three contributing departments, as well as to other City agencies.

4. Census Information

The 1970 Census will provide the first small area profile of Boston's population since the 1960 Census. The geocoding of the assessor's information will make it possible to compare the

physical characteristics of the City with the demographic and economic characteristics of its population. Underenumeration is likely to be a serious problem in the poorer areas of the city. Areas which show marked disparity between Census data and the CRP physical inventory will be easily designated, and further study may prove fruitful for both Census and the City.

Preparing for the 1970 Census data must begin now. The information provided by the CRP should elicit questions about the population of specific blocks and sections of the City. By preparing these questions before the Census data become available, intelligent and rapid use of Census information will be possible. Of course, one has to be very careful in interpreting small area Census data and sampling results.

Census data must be relegated to a minor role in an information system unless action is taken to update Census data between Censuses. In most cases, Census data are sufficiently comprehensive and relevant to serve as the basis for many of the decisions that must be made by urban managers and planners. As time passes, however, Census data may become misleading. This is especially true in particular inner city areas or transitional neighborhoods.

In general, the utility of Census data between Censuses can be increased by using the transition data generated by city department operations. For instance, the assessor's file can be used to update the basic Census data resource and to validate whether the trends indicated in the Census data are continuing. Furthermore, this type of operation can be done on a small area or neighborhood basis. School Department data are already being used for population estimates. Further refinement of school data could yield estimates of migration and racial composition.

C. ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

The information system will be used to answer important questions which occur regularly, such as who owns a particular piece of property, how large is it, and how many times it has changed hands in the past year. This information is very important to city departments and is not now easily obtained. The system will also be useful in answering questions which relate to broader issues.

Specifically, the information system will first be used to focus on the basic issues relating to the assessment and tax situation in the City. Boston's property tax currently yields about 40 percent of the City's annual operating revenue. The assessed valuation of Boston's taxable property has been increasing by only one percent per year. Expenses have been rising

by at least 10 percent. This situation has put enormous pressure on Boston's tax rate.

Attempts to attract private investment or to encourage rehabilitation are affected by tax policy. Urban renewal directly affects the City's tax base. There are a number of areas where the City's powers to raise taxes, control rents, and otherwise influence the economics of housing construction and maintenance have impacts on important aspects of City development, such as:

a. the income and expenses of people and businesses
b. the willingness of investors to build in the City
c. the condition of the housing stock
d. the provision of City services
e. the relative attraction of the City versus the suburbs
f. the ability of the City government to operate effectively, particularly in carrying out its emerging responsibilities for implementing plans and programs for renewal and development.

A major part of our initial analysis will be to develop ways to measure these impacts and their relationships in a form that can be easily transmitted to policy makers. One particular problem is the effect of tax changes on housing maintenance.

Until a complete picture of Boston's housing stock and property tax base is available, it would be very difficult to estimate the cost or impact of any new tax incentive program. We feel it is very important that information about the housing stock and property tax base be available in successive years. One-shot analyses are likely to become misleading after a period of time. Moreover, without a continuous flow of data it is impossible to monitor the changes one hopes to encourage with new programs.

2. Policy Analysis

Access to a comprehensive information system will provide a great stimulus to a deeper and broader examination of critical issues facing the City; to date, such rigorous attention to these issues has generally been avoided because of the cost and inconvenience of manipulating the data. Six examples of such issues are presented in this section.

a. Valuation and Classification by Use

A bill has been filed for the next session of the General Court to amend the state constitution to allow the taxation of property at different percentages of valuation according to use. An

information system of the type we are developing will allow the Mayor and his cabinet to analyze the possible impact of the legislation, based on alternative assumptions.

At the time a transfer of property is recorded at the Registry of Deeds, information such as a property description, the names of the old and new owners, and the recorded sales price of the property is collected by employees of the Assessing Department. There are enough property sales each year to obtain good estimates of how market price varies with location and recorded physical characteristics. Recorded sale price may be considered to depend on the location of the property, its use, and its physical characteristics. The statistical technique used to obtain the estimates is known as multiple regression. The results of this statistical analysis will allow us to predict the market value of all taxable property in the City based on its location, use, and physical characteristics. The predicted value of any one piece of property will not necessarily be close to its true market value. In general, assuming the random distribution of errors, the predicted market value of a group of properties will be extremely close to the actual total. (If the unexplained variance in price is large for any particular class of property, the assessors will know that they should put a proportionately greater effort into appraising that class of property.)

After obtaining the predicted market value of property, it will be possible to aggregate the information for any class of property or any geographic subdivision of the City. The effect of taxing property differentially according to use will be examined by the following method. Given a fixed City budget level and any percent valuation by use, a new tax rate and its associated tax bills will be derived. The computed tax bills will be compared to the current tax bills to determine exactly how the amount of taxes paid by any particular class of property owners would change. As part of this analysis or as a separate effort, we could produce an index of property price by type and by section of the City. If data from previous years were included, a time series of this index could be derived to show how property values change year by year. The areas in which property values are changing rapidly would probably be discovered. Areas of the City for which values differed significantly from the average could be examined to discover the causes of this difference. Hopefully, the interaction between land use patterns and property values could be observed, and appropriate public programs and actions could be initiated. Changes in price are a reflection of changes in supply and/or demand. If the price of commercial property is rising more rapidly than that of residential property, further study might illuminate the causes of this difference and make policy decisions more informed.

The assessors may use the information to help them with their more mechanical chores. An estimate of market value on which to base the assessed value may be provided to them. This would facilitate transition to differential taxation or be of use in estimating the effects of any policy they wish to follow.

b. Zoning

It was mentioned above that with the aid of the CRP information system we might observe the effect of changing land use patterns on property values. In general, the assessors have information that would be useful in developing a zoning policy for the City.

One example of a policy program which could be developed from the assessor's information is a bonus system like that in New York City. This system empowers the city to allow a developer to construct a higher building or a building with a larger floor-area ratio than normal if certain public needs will be satisfied by the project. New York City has explicitly encouraged the construction of new theaters by such a bonus system.

The Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the agency responsible for formulating the City's zoning policy, has expressed an interest in developing new ways by which Boston can creatively shape its future physical composition. Once the BRA,

in consultation with the Mayor and other City departments, has determined the changes it would like to effect, the assessors' information could help spot the areas in which the City has the most leverage to accomplish its aims.

For example, the City might want to encourage the creation of parking facilities in a certain area. The assessors' data would be used to pinpoint the number of dwelling units in an area of proposed residential construction and this could be compared to parking capacity in the same area. Zoning restrictions could be changed to allow higher buildings for developers who agreed to build in parking facilities. Or, perhaps, a comparison of assessors' data and Census data could show those areas of the City in which apartments were overcrowded. Special programs could be devised to encourage relocation and enlargement of apartments. Without the information system it would not be possible to estimate the relative magnitudes of a number of these kinds of issues.

The assessors' information and the Building Department data would also be helpful in getting an accurate picture of what already exists in an area. Thus, for example, although an area may be zoned to exclude buildings over a certain height or with

less than a specific frontage, the records of these departments may show that several buildings in the area do violate those standards. This may either point up a need for changing the zoning requirements or it may show that allowing the developer a few more stories or more depth would not cause hardship to anyone.

c. Tax Exempt Property in Boston

A large proportion of Boston's property is tax exempt. Almost 19 of Boston's 48 square miles of land area are used by tax exempt governmental, educational, and religious institutions. Boston is currently faced with a dilemma; while its economy is heavily reliant on tax exempt non-religious institutions, it does not realize any direct tax revenue from them. Tax revenue foregone should qualify as an expenditure item as much as payroll. The City can calculate the implicit subsidy to various types of institutions, if it has the data and aggregates information properly. As long as the City is reliant on the property tax, there will be a situation in which some property users will bear the burden of government expenses and others will not. However, the CRP system should provide information to City officials as to what these tax exemptions imply.

An analysis should be made of the effects of reduction of tax exempt property on City revenues. The Assessing Department of the City of Boston codes the uses of tax-exempt property. All City-owned property is designated by a letter. All non-City-owned tax exempt property, including, but by no means limited to, property of the federal government and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, is designated by a number. Each letter and number represents a different use exempted by the General Laws of the Commonwealth.

With the information provided by the CRP, it will be possible for the Mayor to judge the effect of future changes in the tax laws. He will know what the potential yield of any class of presently tax-exempt properties will be. If the City of Boston were to tax some of its own property, the payment might qualify for matching state or federal funds. For example, following the Medicaid reimbursement procedure, every $1 million in local real estate taxes on municipal hospitals which was reflected in room costs might, in turn, cost the City only $250,000; $750,000 would be collected from the state and federal governments.

d. Tax Abatements

At the present time, Boston grants tax abatements only to developers of new housing, not necessarily to owners of existing buildings who may want to make major improvements to their property

Under the present system only a small proportion of the City's housing stock is benefitted. It is possible to measure the costs and benefits of alternative abatement policies. Tax credits could be used to encourage landlords to keep their buildings in better condition, to make major improvements, which they could not otherwise afford, or to satisfy the City's desire to attract families (back) into Boston.

This last point may require further explanation. It might be said that a clear aim of the City is to encourage families to move (back) into the City. The assessors' information could be useful in revealing the kinds and locations of units which should be looked to first as potential homes for these families. It would, perhaps, be possible for the City to grant tax abatements to property owners willing, but otherwise financially unable, to convert their buildings into ones containing apartments suitable for different-sized families.

It remains to be determined exactly how this kind of tax abatement policy should be developed and implemented: what kinds of improvements would qualify a landlord for a tax credit, what the tax credit rates should be, what City agency should supervise this system, and how it should be implemented. The information system would be helpful in determining the potential costs of any program.

e. Housing Location and Rehabilitation

Any attempt to meet the national housing goal of 26 million units in the 1970's will necessarily involve substantial federal participation. The CRP system will eventually provide information on exactly what the housing stock is in Boston and how it is changing. It may, thus, become an aid to site selection for future urban renewal areas or projects. We see the CRP information system as a potential tool for urban renewal project directors.

A situation in which a similar information system could have come to the aid of the City arose in New York. Under the auspices of Urban Renewal, the City of New York nearly tore down a number of very large old units desperately needed to house large families, planning to put small units where the large ones stood. The program was redirected toward rehabilitation and a critical need was served. Accurate information could have illuminated the problem at the start.

The information system will provide the name and address of the owner of the property, how often the property changes hands, the current use and size of the property, and the uses of neighboring parcels. It will be possible to calculate the change in tax base which occurs at and around an urban renewal site.

The system will also make it possible to pinpoint vacant land in the City and identify its owner. This job has recently been done as a one-shot study at a cost of $17,000. With the information system being built now, it will be possible to do the study for the cost of computer time, and the information will be continuously updated.

f. Rent Control

The new Boston Rent Control Ordinance will provide a complaint system for tenants who feel their rents are going up without justification. The landlord, once complained about, will have to appear before the Rent Control Board and provide information about his expenses. All rents as of December 1, 1969, are presumed fair (i.e., this is the base) and the Board will consider the validity of increases since then. It does not have the power to issue City-wide orders. The Rent Control System will provide, on a case-by-case basis, information on rents, landlords' costs, description of apartments, and whether increased services justify a rent increase. Landlords will be required to register each time they raise rents. This information will easily be integrated into the information system.

The Mayor's Office is of the opinion that the following information would be useful to the Rent Control Board:

i. the name of the landlord

ii. the tax bill for the property

iii. the value of the building

iv. the condition of the building

v. the annual cost for repairs and alterations.

Most of this information will be included in the assessors' data base already. The exceptions are: change in condition and the landlord's cost over a period of years for repairs and alterations. Information on condition can be obtained from the Housing Inspection Department. The Building Department collects the necessary information about repairs and alterations. The framework of the CRP information system should give the Rent Control Board a start. Their data will be very informative, if properly structured in the early stages of the Board's tenure.

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAM MASS. R-131 (CR)

DECEMBER 31, 1969

ACCOUNT CLASSIFICATION NO.	Description	APPROVED BUDGET	COSTS INCURRED	ENCUMBRANCES	BALANCE
C 1410.2	Staff Salaries	$ 286,540.00	$ 144,265.76		$ 142,274.2
C 1410.7	Employee Benefit Contr.	33,515.00	17,053.44		16,461.5
C 1410.91	Travel	7,000.00	148.74		6,851.2
C 1410.92	Reproduction & Reports	15,000.00			15,000.0
C 1410.93	Other Administrative Costs	10,850.00	113.00		10,737.0
C 1430	Contract Services	508,300.00	207,262.48	56,337.52	244,700.0
1440	Other Income		(3,885.03)		3,885.0
C 1460	Other Costs	- -	- -	- -	- -
C 1475	Non-expendable Equipment	8,595.00			8,595.0
	Sub-Total	$ 869,800.00	$ 364,958.39	$ 56,337.52	$ 448,504.0
	Contingencies	111,250.00			111,250.0
	TOTAL CRP BUDGET	$ 981,050.00	$ 364,958.39	$ 56,337.52	$ 559,754.0

ENCUMBRANCES

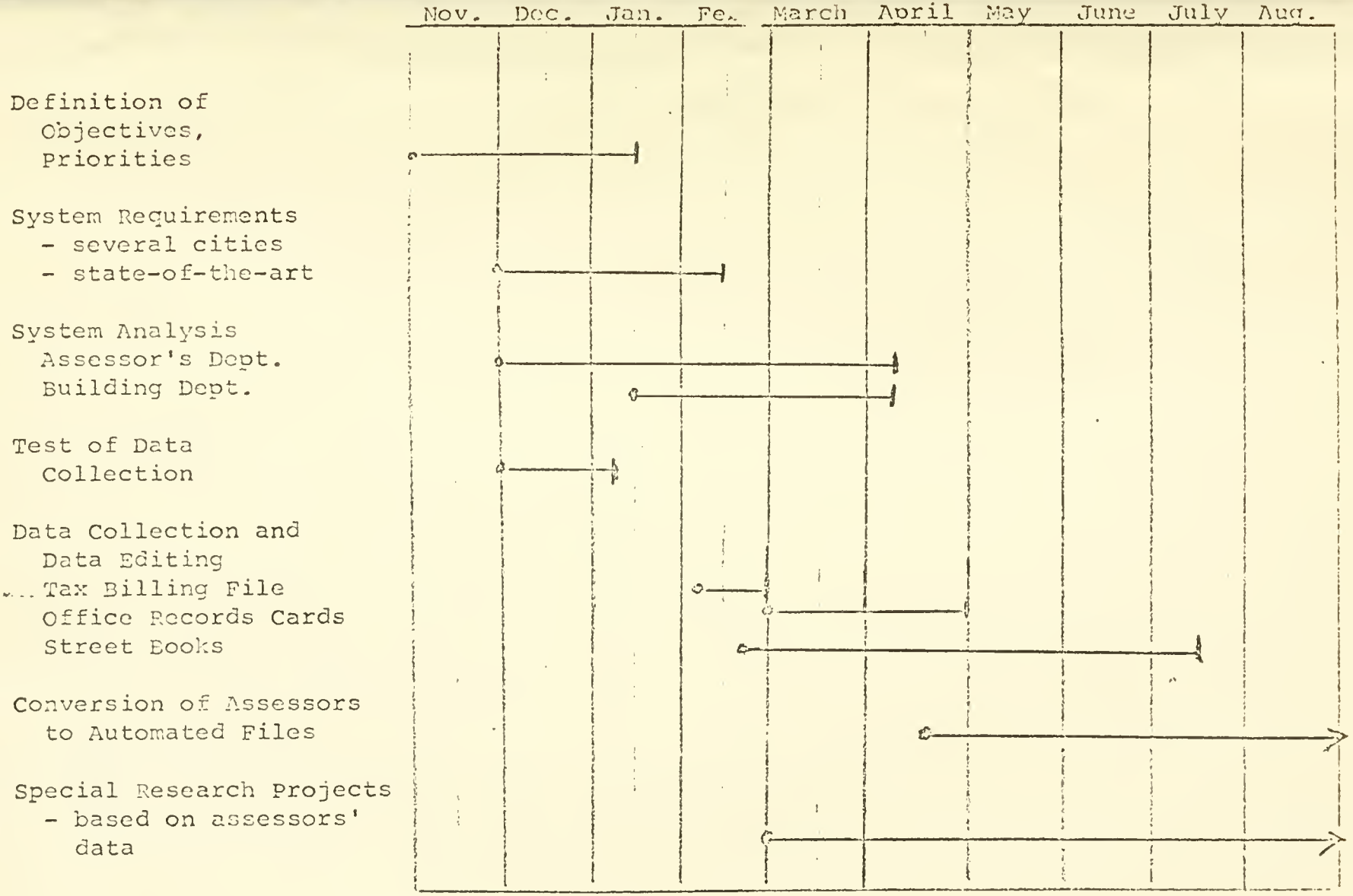
City of Boston - Model Cities	1,012.34
Arthur D. Little, Inc.	25,575.19
ABT Associates, Inc.	17,794.99
Harry R. Feldman, Inc.	3,955.00
George P. Leyland	6,000.00
Urban Data Processing, Inc.	2,000.00
	$ 56,337.52

Contract Servic Budget

Stage	Contract Services	Schedule
Definition of Objectives and Priorities of CRP	Paid	Nov.,1969-Jan.,1970
System Requirements Survey of assessing data Processing in several cities State-of-the-art Requirements of automated assessing department	Paid	Dec.,1969-Feb.,1970
Systems Analysis		
Assessors Department	5,000	Dec., 1969-April, 1970
Building Department	4,000	Jan., 1970-April, 1970
Test of Geocode with Polk Data	Paid	October, 1970
Test of Data Collection with Assessors' Records for Ward 5	Paid	Dec., 1969-Jan.,1970
Data Collection		
Street Books	10,000	Feb., 1970-June, 1970
Office Record Cards	20,000	Feb., 1970-April, 1970
Computer Programming for Data Analysis (as part of BRA data requirements and CRP special projects)	12,000	Feb., 1970-Sept., 1970
Lease for Geocode	8,000	
Lease for Address Matching Program	6,000	
Additional Systems Analysis To guage effects of system on operation of other departments	20,000	March, 1970-June, 1970

Contract Services Budget (cont'd)

Stage	Contract Services	Schedule
Conversion of Assessors to Automated System	$80,000	April, 1970
Research Projects with Assessors and other Data Series	80,000	March, 1970
Total	$245,000	



TIME SCHEDULE

2/19/

2019

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